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RUEHBK/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 0760
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1824
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RUEHKB/AMEMBASSY KOROR 0131
RUEHJM/AMEMBASSY MAJURO 0662
RUEHML/AMEMBASSY MANILA 0210
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SUBJECT: GEF-PAS: SLOW PROGRESS IN PREPARING NATIONAL PRIORITIES
SUBMISSION

REFS: A) STATE 136425 B) SUVA 463 C) SUVA 245 (NOTAL)

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: We contacted the countries covered by Embassy Suva to encourage them to engage to the fullest extent possible with the World Bank and other organizations to develop their Global Environment Facility Pacific Alliance for Sustainability (GEF-PAS) priority lists before the October 15 deadline, as instructed in reftel A. There appears to have been slow progress to date in Fiji, Tonga, and Kiribati. Tuvalu has prepared a draft submission. We have not been able to reach anyone in Nauru. The World Bank still has not finalized contracts with the consultants that were to have provided assistance. Responsibility for coordinating regional organization participation in GEF-PAS now resides with the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), where the GEF advisor says the Secretariat has been in touch with members to offer assistance. The Pacific Islands Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC) has also reached out to its membership. The Forum Secretariat does not see a role for itself at this stage in the

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process. End Summary.

12. (SBU) a World Bank regional consultant for GEF-PAS, Alan Resture, who works at the University of the South Pacific in Suva, told us on October 3 that the World Bank still has not finalized his contract or the contracts of the other consultants. He can schedule meetings but cannot actually travel without a signed contract, he said.

13. (U) Fiji: We called the acting permanent secretary of the Fiji Ministry of Tourism and Environment, Manasa Sovaki, on October 1. (Permanent Secretary Kaumaitotoya and Director for Environment Epeli Nasome, who both attended the GEF-PAS meeting in Apia (reftel B), are away this week: Kaumaitotoya on business in Switzerland and Nasome on leave.) Sovaki was unaware both of an October 15 deadline and of GEF-PAS itself. He requested information on the initiative, which we provided by sending him a link to the GEF website and a copy of the World Bank document. Resture, the World Bank consultant assigned to Fiji, told us on October 3 that he has been in contact

with Environment Director Nasome on October 2, and has tentatively scheduled the Fiji consultation for October 9.

14. (SBU) Kiribati: We spoke by telephone on October 1 with Environment and Conservation Division Deputy Director Tess Teariki-Ruatu. Asked about progress toward preparing Kiribati's list of priorities for GEF-PAS funding, Teariki-Ruatu replied that "things are not going well." Her division is having internal consultations and discussions with stakeholders in the biodiversity focal area this week, she said, but there has been no national-level consultation yet. Teariki-Ruatu, who was also in Apia for the GEF-PAS meeting, told us she had a number of questions on process and funding levels. She said officials were consulting a visiting UNDP team that is in Tarawa on other business and that she planned to contact the SPREP GEF advisor. Her government had had no assistance from the World Bank or other international or regional organizations thus far.

15. (SBU) Tonga: Tonga's GEF operational focal point, Ministry of Lands, Survey, Natural Resources and Environment CEO Dr. Nailasikau Halatuituia is out of the country and will not return to Tonga until next week. On October 2, we phoned Tonga's designated GEF-PAS point of contact (and Apia-meeting participant), Ministry of Finance and Planning officer Caroline Tupoulahi-Fusimalohi. She said her government, which she noted is fully occupied with Pacific Islands Forum leaders' meeting preparations, is struggling with its GEF-PAS submission. She told us that officials have agreed to form a national GEF interagency committee but have not yet adopted terms of reference for it. Although a World Bank consultant is scheduled to arrive in Tonga later this week to assist with national consultations, it will be difficult to make any progress until Halatuituia returns, she said.

16. (U) Tuvalu: In the absence of the Acting Secretary for Natural Resources and the Acting Director of Environment, who are both out

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of the country, we spoke on October 3 with Tuvulu environment department official Peputua Latasi. She told us that Tuvalu's national GEF coordinating committee met last week to prepare a draft submission. Latasi said that the World Bank consultant is scheduled to arrive in Tuvalu on October 12. This will not leave much time to finalize Tuvalu's submission, she said.

17. (U) Nauru: No one from Nauru attended the Apia GEF meeting. SPREP GEF officer Joe Stanley told us that Acting Director of Commerce, Industry and Resources Russ Kun is Nauru's point of contact for GEF-PAS but Kun's office says he is out of the country until next week. Because of telephone difficulties, we have been unable to reach anyone else in the ministry. World Bank consultant Resture told us that he too has been unable to make contact with anyone in Nauru.

18. (SBU) Regional Organizations: Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat Regional and International Issues Advisor Coral Pasisi told us on October 2 that the Forum Secretariat has not accepted the coordinating role with Pacific regional organizations in the GEF-PAS process that was described in the "Next Steps" document the Bank circulated on September 24. She said that she informed the World Bank of this immediately and suggested that function should be carried out by SPREP. Pasisi also explained that the Forum Secretariat does not have a role in the national consultation

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process the Bank is leading. (She said that two weeks ago the Forum offered the World Bank assistance from its staff to supplement the efforts of Bank-engaged consultants, but the Bank never responded to this offer.) She envisions the Forum Secretariat engaging at a later stage to help identify on-going or planned regional programs to count as co-financing for GEF projects. She shared her view that most countries, with the help of Bank consultants, should be able to assemble their lists of priorities by October 15. The real challenge will come after that, she said, when the Bank tries to coordinate production of the fifty or sixty Project Identification Forms that will then be required.

¶9. (U) SOPAC Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) Project Advisor Rhonda Bower told us on October 2 that SOPAC has been in contact with GEF and IWRM country focal points to provide support for their GEF-PAS submissions. Bower said she was hopeful that countries would identify IWRM as a priority. SOPAC is proceeding on the assumption that they will and has sent out invitations to national focal points to participate in a third planning meeting in November. (Reftel C reports on IWRM.)

¶10. (U) In a telephone conversation of October 2, SPREP's Stanley confirmed that his organization, rather than the Forum Secretariat, will take on the regional agency coordinating function during preparation of the GEF-PAS submission. He added that he and other SPREP staff were available to assist countries throughout the process and that SPREP had sent out a notice to focal points to that effect. So far, he said, four members had responded to the notice to request assistance, which SPREP is providing.
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